

A close-up photograph of a young green seedling with four leaves, each covered in numerous clear water droplets. The seedling is growing out of dark, rich soil. A semi-transparent blue rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title text.

Top 25 Tips for

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS IN 2016

salesforce

sales cloud



INTRODUCTION

Here at Salesforce, we understand what it means to start small and grow fast. We've been there, and we know how stressful and rewarding it is to go from scrappy startup to enterprise software leader. Over the past year, our marketing team has also spent time talking to many smart entrepreneurs and small business leaders about what makes them successful; you can read those stories [here](#) and [here](#).

Some spoke about how to manage sales pipeline, while others focused on delivering the kind of customer service that inspires enduring loyalty. Still others highlighted the importance of hiring smart, working hard, and – one of our favorites – simply being kind. Read on for tons of valuable insight into growing your business this year.

Sales

It all starts with sales. No matter what industry you're in, or what your growth strategy looks like, you're going to need customers. And even if your product is a free app or an online community, eventually, you'll need a particular kind of customer: the kind who brings in the revenue that drives your business and enables you to grow.



1: Plan for Growth

This might sound obvious, but many small businesses are so focused on ensuring growth actually happens that they fail to adequately plan for it. Maria Frantz is Vice President of Operations at [Achievelt](#), a results-management platform designed to help business leaders successfully execute their plans and initiatives.

“The goal is to grow and scale over time, so what tools are going to get you in the right spot from the beginning?” Frantz explains. “The challenges at the beginning are all about identifying the steps you need to take and then figuring out which tools support those steps in order to scale over time.”

Ready to make a plan? Start here:

[Why Growth at Every Step Requires Complete Visibility into Your Data](#)

[The Quest for Growth: How Small Businesses Are Taking It to the Next Level](#)

2: The 5 Commandments of Closing the Deal

The 2015 launch of SalesforceIQ was big news for small businesses. SalesforceIQ for Small Business is an intelligent, out-of-the-box CRM solution that easily sets up in minutes, giving small business sales teams access to Relationship Intelligence technology that takes selling to a new level.

Armando Mann, VP of Sales and Customer Success at SalesforceIQ, has great advice for sales reps looking to close more deals (and honestly, who isn't ?). According to Mann, successful reps follow the five commandments of closing the deal:

- Know thy customer
- Know thy numbers
- Know thy pipeline
- Know thy resources
- Know thyself

3: To Expand Your Pipeline, Narrow It First

We talked with Michael Boyette, Executive Editor at the Rapid Learning Institute, about a sales best practice that seems counterintuitive: to sell more, keep your pipeline lean. “You’d think that a healthy sales pipeline is one that’s full of leads. Research suggests otherwise: lean pipelines generated 48% more revenue than fat ones,” Boyette explains. “The key to a healthy pipeline: disqualify bad leads early, freeing up time to dig deeper with good leads.”

Ready to clean up your sales pipeline? Here’s how:


[Quick Ways to Clean Up Your Sales & Marketing Pipeline](#)

4: Know When You Need CRM

When you’re just starting out, investing in CRM can feel like a big step. Ethan Senturia is co-founder and CEO of Dealstruck, a financial technology startup that provides loans to other small businesses. According to Senturia, you might need CRM sooner than you think – and here are two key signs you’re at that point.

“If you’re unable to keep up with lead flow or customer demand,” Senturia says, it’s an early sign you need a better system. “If you find yourself being slow to respond to people, or you’re getting lots of inbound follow-up like ‘Hey, I’ve been waiting to hear back from you,’ then you probably need a CRM.”

Second, he says, “if you have real trouble measuring the value of your sales funnel,” CRM can help you figure out which leads are more likely to become actual revenue – and, based on that, where your sales team should invest time and energy. “If you find yourself unable to forecast or understand the value of what your ultimate output is before the output is generated,



“80% of sales teams say acquiring new customers is a top sales objective, followed by growing the value of existing customers and creating deeper customer relationships.”

2015 State of Sales, Salesforce Research



because you have to make decisions that impact it along the way, then you probably need a CRM,” Senturia explains.

Get the entrepreneur’s complete guide to CRM:

[The Entrepreneurs Guide to Picking the Right CRM](#)

5: Live in Your CRM

Getting the right tools is only the first step. If you’re not using your CRM – living in it, in fact – you’re not getting maximum value out of your technology. Dave Kurlan, the founder and CEO of Objective Management Group, Inc., says salespeople should get cozy with their CRM systems.

“Live in your CRM,” Kurlan advises. “Begin each day in your CRM, identify your pipeline gap and fill it, update your conversations in real time, jumpstart stalled opportunities, follow your sales process. Use email and calendar to support your life in CRM. Live in your CRM.”

See more tips from sales thought leaders:

[130 Sales Tips from 2015](#)

6: Always Be Hiring

In sales, the traditional mantra is ABC – “Always Be Closing” – but for Jason Lemkin, Managing Director at Storm Ventures, it ought to be about hiring.

“If you don’t constantly hire reps, you’ll never grow the top line as fast as you could,” Lemkin explains. “You need to Always Be Hiring sales reps. Once you have an engine going, have faith. Have faith they’ll generate and close the leads. And they will – if they’re great. If your sales team is understaffed, you’ll leave money on the table. A little overstaffed is better. Do that, and you’ve got a chance to exceed your current plan.”

See more tips:

[7 Tips For Building A Sales Team To Help Your Business Grow](#)

7: Be Kind

We'll bet you've never heard this one before. Bret Peters is the Chief Marketing Officer for Fig Leaf Software, a full-service digital agency and solutions integration firm – and in his view, kindness is just good business.

“The world needs more kindness, and oftentimes, busy business people get wrapped up in problems which are largely the result of poor communication,” Peters says. For his business, using a CRM system like Salesforce has helped make clear, effective communication the norm. “Everything about Salesforce supports transparency and measurement,” he explains. “The knowledge and insight a business can gain from the use of Salesforce and Data.com helps everyone in a business stay on the same page.”

How Sales Teams Can Kill It in 2016

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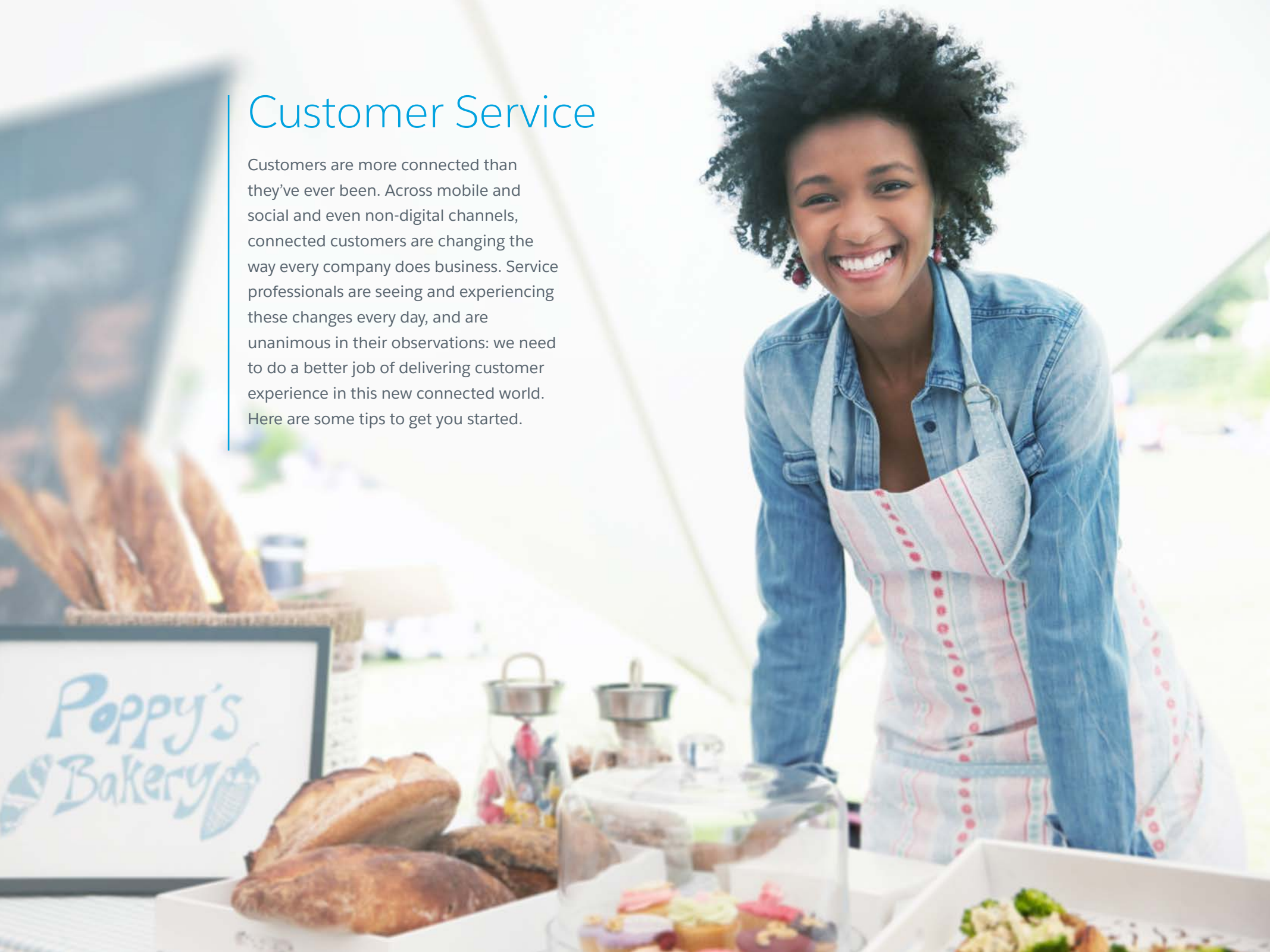
Turn your sales organization and yourself into a learner. “The ability to constantly be learning is crucial,” says Jill Konrath, a small business expert and the bestselling author of *Agile Selling*, *Selling to Big Companies* and *SNAP Selling*. “If I were running a sales organization today, I'd have my team reading books, subscribing to newsletters and getting a steady dose of what's new and what's going on.”

Simplify your sales process. Find out where people get stuck in making the decisions. If you're losing people because they're not deciding to change from the status quo, then you need to look at what you can do to make it easier for them.

Dump distractions. It's a good time to really analyze your work day and see where you can strip away mindless emailing. Revamp your workflow so that you're no longer wasting valuable selling time.

Customer Service

Customers are more connected than they've ever been. Across mobile and social and even non-digital channels, connected customers are changing the way every company does business. Service professionals are seeing and experiencing these changes every day, and are unanimous in their observations: we need to do a better job of delivering customer experience in this new connected world. Here are some tips to get you started.



8: It's All About Relationships

Jason Ruebel is Vice President of Operations at [LISNR](#), a sound-tech startup and mobile innovation leader. For his company, customer service goes way beyond fast response times and issue resolution. Instead, it's about building a foundation of strong customer relationships so that LISNR's customers become partners in evolving and improving the product.

"We've found that even though we're a SaaS platform, our customers are still relying on us for consulting," Ruebel said in an interview. "By being willing to lean in on relationships and provide marketing and implementation guidance, we've been able to build really solid customer relationships. Because of those relationships, when our customers find a bug, they reach out and work with us to fix it versus simply uninstalling the product."

Want to learn more ? Start here:

[Here's a Quick Fix That Will Keep Customers From Uninstalling Your Product](#)

[360-Degree View of Your Customer](#)

9: Don't Wait for Customer Feedback to Come to You

The best customer service teams know a simple truth: people don't always like to talk about their feelings. "Businesses tend to self-rationalize that most good customers actually do complain when they're unhappy," says John Goodman, Vice Chairman of Customer Care Measurement & Consulting (CCMC). "That's just not true. If you think otherwise, you could be losing out of millions of dollars—regardless of what kind of business you're running."

Mark Kushinsky, founder and CEO of MaidPro, a home-cleaning company that successfully expanded from one market into a franchise with 180+ locations, agrees.

"You need to be constantly in touch with your customers, actively soliciting their feedback, because unhappy customers don't always tell you they're dissatisfied," Kushinsky says. "They tell others, or they simply walk away. The converse is also true. Happy customers tell their friends and relatives, and that's a big key to how we continue to grow."

10: Hire for the Right Skills

To successfully deliver amazing customer service, Marie Rosecrans, VP of Customer Service at Desk.com says, companies need to hire the right people – and that means people who are truly invested in making your customers successful.

“Early in my career, I learned that the best subject matter expert doesn’t always make the best customer service specialist,” Rosecrans explains. “Supporting and serving customers requires a passion and a special DNA – these individuals get a special sense of gratification from working with and satisfying customers. You can hire someone who learns quickly, but you can’t necessarily teach someone to care about customers – that’s intrinsic to who they are.”

Get started now:

[20 Best Practices For Awesome Customer Service](#)

11: Know Which Channels Your Customers Care About

Today’s consumers are channel omnivores: in a single day, the same customer may interact with your company on social media, through your website, over the phone, via live chat, and within your mobile app. So while great customer service must be omni-channel, for small businesses, sometimes it’s hard to know where to focus.

Sebastian Dederig, Head of Customer Success at the fast-growing mobile payments company iZettle, says knowing which customers the company planned to target helped inform their decision to invest in Desk.com as a customer support tool.



“These days, good customer service is table stakes—it’s expected. Customers today rightfully expect to be delighted and WOW’d.”

Marie Rosecrans
VP of Customer Experience
Desk.com

“We knew that our customer support team would be growing very rapidly as we were about to launch in three new markets,” Dederling says. “We needed a tool we could grow with and would provide the kind of multi-lingual support that we needed for European expansion. It was also really important that we found a tool that supported all of the main channels we offer to our users—email, Facebook, and Twitter.”

12: Help Customers Help Themselves

We talked to Sam Franklin, the founder and CEO of Greenvelope, fast-growing electronic invitation, ticketing, and event management company, about how customer service figured into his company’s growth strategy.

“I have a really strong belief that our growth is directly tied to the experiences that we create for customers and the positive word of mouth growth that results,” Franklin told us. One of those experiences is a knowledge base that Franklin says “makes it really fast and easy for customers to find their own answers.” For Greenvelope, it’s a win-win.

“Today’s customers like to help themselves and they really appreciate the clear articles for instant answers,” Franklin explains. “Additionally, we get a lot of data through our customer service system that helps us continually optimize our business processes.”

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Look to create faster service to drive repeat

business. We know that 85% of customers have been put on hold because the agent didn’t know what to say and needed to check, according to Dr Nicola J. Millard, SuperAgent 2020: The evolution of the 2020 contact centre. Strategize ways to connect your service agents in a whole new way.

Tap powerful insights to identify high-value

customers. It’s time to get smarter and predict more about your own customers. It’s also a good idea to use those insights to sell support packages to drive recurring business.

Marketing

Modern marketing is all about the customer – from getting the right insights about your customers to delivering the right message on the right channel, at the right time. For small businesses, defining your brand and values is a key starting point. Then, it's about building a smart strategy around those values – and measuring success so you can optimize along the way.



13: Define Your Brand and Values – Now

As luxury sports-apparel startup PlayerLayer knows from competing with some of the biggest names in retail (think Nike and Adidas), building a new brand is no easy feat. But social media has done a lot to level the playing field (pun intended!) for brands like PlayerLayer. “When you’re social, you don’t need a \$100 million advertising budget,” PlayerLayer CEO Joe Middleton [says](#). “You just need good ideas.”

With a defined brand should come a defined set of values and priorities, so your entire company stays united around a single set of goals that help define the culture. “Small businesses need to define brand and values early on to compete,” notes Jonathan Hunt, COO of Desk.com. “If you are doing everything, you’re not doing anything meaningful.”

14: Know When Less Is More

As you’re building out your marketing strategy and hiring your team, it can be tempting to move in every direction at once. Marketing is a rapidly evolving field, with a host of competing technologies designed to help you keep up. Yet according to Dustin Tattoli, a Digital Marketing Specialist at Integrated Project Management Company, Inc., it’s important not to get carried away.

“Regardless of the sophistication of your marketing team’s capabilities, start with what makes sense for your business and don’t make the all-too-common mistake of trying to do too much,” Tattoli says. “Remember that less is sometimes more, and a diluted message doesn’t foster organic growth. It’s better to plan fewer, well-thought-out marketing campaigns for a short period than attempting 15 and falling short due to lack of process or resources.”

Ready to brand yourself? Start here:

[4 Ways Your Sales Team Can Help](#)

[Build Your Brand](#)

15: Know the “Why” Behind Your Marketing

In a recent episode of the [Marketing Cloudcast](#), Kyle Lacy, Head of Marketing Strategy at OpenView Venture Partners, highlighted the importance of the “why” in marketing:

“A marketer’s job...is not to sit in a room and think of the next creative billboard we should create,” Lacy told podcast co-hosts Heike Young and Joel Book. “It’s understanding why people are driving by that billboard and creating content around that, using data.”

There’s another “why” at stake, too. Marketing isn’t just about understanding your customers’ or prospects’ motivations—it’s also about having a clear view of your own. What, exactly, do you want to achieve in each campaign, and how do you prioritize these goals? Without knowing why people are absorbing our marketing, and why we want them to absorb it in the first place, how will you know when you succeed?

16: Get Scientific

Time to crack open those sixth-grade science books! To develop a truly data-driven marketing approach, you’re going to need a process – and the tried-and-true Scientific Method is just about perfect. Need a refresher? It starts with a question, followed by a hypothesis – your best guess at the answer. Then comes a data-driven experiment, followed by analysis of the results, and finally, a conclusion. While most marketers are good at the question-hypothesis phase, we don’t always follow through with a complete, data-driven experiment – which is a big miss, according to Luke Perera, a marketing and communications executive at First Mile, a fast-growing waste collection and recycling company.





“Experiment with different approaches to help you accomplish your aims,” Perera advises. “Try a number of methods and identify the one with the best success rate. You can then drop the others and back the best horse.”

17: Look – Strategically – Before You Leap

Content marketing has gained traction in recent years not only because it’s an effective inbound marketing tactic, but also because it has none of the barriers to entry of traditional marketing. Rather than having to scare up thousands of dollars to fund a VIP event or an ambitious print advertising campaign, you can publish blog posts for free.

But that doesn’t necessarily mean you should jump in. Joe Pulizzi, founder of Content Marketing Institute, says in a recent [episode of the Marketing Cloudcast](#), “If you’re not writing down your strategy, it doesn’t exist.” [Sixty-eight percent of B2B content marketers](#) don’t have a documented content strategy – and without a documented strategy, you’re creating content without goals or purpose. If you’re going to start content marketing (or doing any other kind of marketing), be sure you have a clearly defined strategy that includes concrete success metrics.

Gain insights from leading content marketers like Ann Handley, Chief Content Officer, Marketing Profs, and Jay Baer, bestselling author, global keynote speaker, and entrepreneur.

[How To Create A Killer Content Strategy](#)

18: Use Predictive Intelligence to Align Your Organization Around the Customer

Most small businesses are all too familiar with blurring the lines between sales, marketing, customer service, and product development. In some cases, a single person wears all of those hats at once – yet as your business grows, many companies lose that natural alignment.

To Alison Murdock, Vice President of Marketing for the predictive intelligence platform [6sense](#), predictive intelligence gives small businesses a chance to get it back – in a way more efficient way.

“As prospective customers evaluate solutions, they use a vast array of digital resources—some you control (website) and others you don’t (search)—and are leaving traces and time-sensitive interactions that tell us where they are in the sales cycle and the products of interest,” Murdock explains. Integrating with CRM systems of record like Salesforce, 6sense pulls all of those data points together into insights that help sales teams and marketers make truly data-driven decisions – and the companies doing that, Murdock says, will be “Silicon Valley’s next generation of winners.”

Are you ready for the dawn of the digital marketer? Click here to learn more:

[Dawn of the Digital Marketer](#)

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Attract and convert customers using a combination of free content and content gated behind a form.

Your buyers are spending their time online. According to [Forrester](#), 74% of business buyers conduct more than half of their research online before making an offline purchase. So how do you make sure you are a part of this research process? By becoming a trusted resource. Create a diverse portfolio of shareable content that will speak to a variety of buyers in different stages of the sales cycle. We’re talking about blog posts, infographics and slideshare presentations that contain personalized and actionable lessons for your target buyer.

Have systems in place to identify your best leads, and respond quickly.

We know that when the time is right speed counts. [Research](#) has shown that as many as 50% of buyers choose the vendor that responds first. Know which customer actions (downloading demos, e-books, etc) trigger the sales funnel, and be ready to respond quickly.

Everything Else

Starting and growing a company is hard work for everyone involved. On any given day, you may need to move faster, be more productive, solve more problems, and adapt to more unique circumstances than ever before. Here are some of our favorite insights from successful business leaders at growing businesses. Their advice ranges from personal productivity tips to visionary inspiration – and some of it may surprise you.



19: Work Smarter – And Harder

“My VP of Sales at my first college job asked our entire sales team what’s more important: working smarter or harder?” recalls Kevin Chiu, Manager of Sales Development at Greenhouse Recruiting, a recruiting optimization platform that helps companies build and scale their recruiting processes. “Most of us said working smarter, and he told us we were all fools. ‘It’s about working smarter AND harder.’ In this day and age, when you surround yourself in a room with people that are all smarter than you, that’s the only way to keep up and strive to be the best.”

Ready to work smarter?

[5 Productivity Tips Every Small Business Needs To Know](#)

20: Think Big

“Embrace the potential of leveraging solutions available to you especially as you grow—that will ensure you grow to scale and your growth is sustainable. I think a lot of folks are cost-conscious early on and they don’t think big picture. These services seem expensive, but I always think of these services as employees on my team.”

—Brandon Staton, Marketing and Public Relations Manager, Transportation Impact

21: Be Adaptable

“Growth should happen quickly and you need a team and a product that can adapt just as quickly.”

Jon Oberheide
CTO and Co-founder
Duo Security

22: Know Something Before You Do Something

"I believe everything should be grounded in an insight. You should know something before you do something. You start with a question: How can we grow, or why is that happening, or why isn't this happening? Then you try to gain the insight. You should be able to rapidly move to the data and see if the data supports your hypothesis, and then you should test your assumption to see how it works. And all of that should be done without having to bring in a bunch of IT guys to pull different data from different places."

—Mark Hope, CEO, Pegasus Sustainability

24: Fight for the User

"We believe in fighting for the user; that phrase is painted on our office wall. We exist for young people. By providing them with something valuable—accessible, free, and meaningful ways to take action on issues they care about—we've continued to grow. We also meet young people where they are, from Snapchat to text messaging, to make it easy for them to find action opportunities. It shouldn't compete with their everyday life."

—Naomi Hirabayashi, CMO, DoSomething.org

25: Eat Your Oatmeal

Your mother probably used to tell you that breakfast was the most important meal of the day. In various interviews with successful entrepreneurs and small-business leaders, we noticed a common thread: oatmeal for breakfast. We don't know why, but just in case it's oatmeal that's the key to their success, we recommend you try it. Read more:

[More Oatmeal, Fewer Business Plans: Key Lessons From Successful Entrepreneurs](#)

23: Stay Focused on the Product

"Staying focused on building a superior product at scale is the key to our success."

Alison Murdock

Vice President of Marketing
6sense

How Every Team Can Kill It in 2016:

It's a new year, which means you need to start 2016 off with the right leads. Here are our Salesforce suggestions:

- Build custom lists in Salesforce with 100% complete information to get your campaigns out the door.
- Know your customers (and prospects) better this year; highlight prospecting insights with call prep questions, competitive intelligence, and industry trends.
- Fuel your CRM with clean data.

Once you've captured your leads, it's time to blur the lines – specifically, the lines between Sales and Support. Wouldn't your sales reps be more effective.

If they knew whether customers had any problems with your products or services? This kind of sales empowerment will lead to better cross-selling opportunities. And don't forget that your support agents can help your bottom line if they're able to align with sales reps and offer top-notch service to your most valuable customers.

- Get proactive about support with connected products and wearables that initiate service tickets.
- Make support part of your experience. Establish a support center that reflects your personality and brand. Add support-center links to relevant pages on your site, or within your app. Or add a way for customers to log tickets right from within your product experience.

Keep in mind this is the year to grow your small business. How can you accomplish this?

- Invest in one integrated system that can scale with your business.
- Provide your employees some mobility with the right tools so they can stay connected and work from the field.
- Leverage technology to look larger than you are.



A sales tool as powerful as you.

Even the best sales people need the right tools to close the deal. Salesforce is the industry leader in customer relationship management and was designed with top sales performers in mind. From the world's most loved CRM features, to cutting edge new functionality that is redefining the industry, Salesforce is focused on one thing: making you successful.

Close more deals, get more leads, gain more insight, and accelerate productivity, with Salesforce Sales Cloud.

[Learn more >](#)

45% Increase in sales pipeline.

44% Increased sales productivity.

37% Increase in sales revenue.





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